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DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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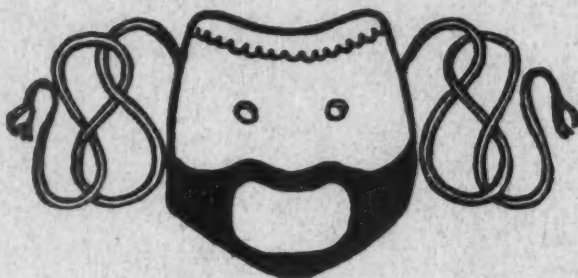
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DRAMA

VOL. V

FEBRUARY MCMXXVII

NUMBER 5

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

JANUARY PLAYS

By Gwen John

MISS SUSAN GLASPELL is the most original, but not the most versatile, mind in the American theatre, and the production of "Bernice," at the Century Theatre, is of interest to all playgoers who care for pioneer work and untried ways. Metaphysics, though alien to dramatic action, have often proved to possess dramatic grip, and Miss Glaspell can enforce attention in the unfolding of her strange hair-splitting moral problems, although, unlike Shakespeare, she gives us no strong plot as "bush." This play, less daringly speculative than "The Verge," less heroically exalted than "Inheritors," conveys to us the character of its dead protagonist by the analysis and reactions of third persons. Up to the end of the second act the high level of interest is unswerving; then it falls a little, from an intrinsic flaw in the logic of the play, and never quite recovers itself.

The acting throughout, and the production, are extraordinarily good. Chief honours go to Miss Esmé Church, closely followed by Miss Honor Bright; but all four actors earned high praise.

"Liliom," a play of charm, and a producer's play, but not a great play, deserved a better fate than three weeks' run. Probably the public to which it might have appealed suspected it of intellectuality. If Mr. Ivor Novello's facile beauty of gesture is the result of his cinema experience, then that stepchild of art may yet serve the parent stock.

"The White-headed Boy," revived for the holidays, proved thin fare in spite of its promising theme. The characterization of Irish comedy is apt to be over-rigidly

cut-and-dried, and the jokes, many of which one can anticipate, too often are mere clichés. Miss Sarah Allgood was good, but the success of the play hung largely on the brilliant over-acting of Miss Maire O'Neill and Mr. Arthur Sinclair. It is fortunate that custom does not stale the absence of variety of this happy company. "The White-headed Boy" was followed by a revival of "Juno and the Paycock," a play in which ironic situation and bitter tragedy are coupled with second-rate humour. Mr. Casey has written far better comedy in "The Plough and the Stars," but for drama, high-water mark is reached in "Juno." It is a play which should not be missed.

"The Beaux' Stratagem" at Hammer-smith, opening with a delightful scene in a Lichfield inn, seemed to me to hang fire, never becoming consistently alive at its more important points. The landlord and the beaux worked hard and creditably. Mr. George Hayes shares with Mr. Ainley the honour of being one of the few actors on the London stage who can pronounce the word "propose" and this in itself has become a rare treat. There was a curious detachment about individual performances. Mr. James Whale, who lately gave so moving a performance in a small part in "The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd," played Sullen with a terrible, baroque intensity, that nearly wrecked the play. Mr. Miles Malleon repeated his well-known impersonation of a half-wit in the part of Scrub. I cannot imagine so unkempt a henchman being allowed to loll against the furniture in Lady Bountiful's room in the presence of the ladies, but he did it. There remains

JANUARY PLAYS

Miss Edith Evans. Well, I prefer Miss Evans a thousand times as she horse-whips her ancient lover in "Venice Preserv'd," or as she deftly characterizes the priceless parlourmaid in "Elizabeth Cooper," to Miss Evans in the hoops and ribbons of the Pitiful Wife. There were several things said at the end of Act II with a charming sincerity, but precision of intonation is not Miss Evans's strongest point. To me at least Miss Evans remained Miss Evans, and the character of Mrs. Sullen never emerged.

Lastly comes "Broadway," a production of unique calibre, combining boot-

legging drama with the attractions of a dance show. It is brilliantly presented, with point and drive and rhythm. One moment in Act II, where the gang closes up round Dan McCorn, is expressionism at its apex. These Americans have a sense of design. The third act has redundancies, but the high-coloured vigour of detail, the sinister adventure and crude comedy, and that strangely-stressed, fatigued, yet raucous language of impoverished vocabulary but endless allusive flexibility, compose a new art. This is an important entertainment.

FASCISM AND THE STAGE

ANOTHER VIEW

By Eric J. Patterson

THE trouble about Fascism is that it is, as a rule, misinterpreted by both its friends and its enemies outside its own country. Fascism is a natural and national product of Italy, called into being to meet a particular Italian problem and to express a native Italian enthusiasm. It is an attempt on the part of Italians to recover the Italian soul; almost lost, so they think, in those waves of cosmopolitan anarchy which swept over Italy in the years of disappointment and discouragement immediately after the war.

It is difficult for a foreigner to analyse those elements which compose Fascism; and to do so may give a false picture: for it is not in analysis, which destroys, but in the creative movement that one gets a vision of the Fascist reality. It may be said, however, that Fascism is essentially in the first place a youth movement. One of the great services which Mussolini rendered to Italy was to turn youth from the frivolous to the adventure of making good through discipline and work.

Youth has faith, enthusiasm, and is capable of embodying its idealism in a hero. Is it any wonder that it sings? The singing of Giovinezza is not only an expression of faith: it is, if you will, a spontaneous act of ritual expressing that faith, and as such you must accept it, even if it leads to the holding up of a Parisian light opera (what a loss to art!).

Fascism is an ex-Service men's movement; it is a Nationalist and Sinn Fein or Self Reliance movement. Until Italy finds herself, how can she play her part in the world? Fascism is, it is true, also a Puritan movement; the Puritanism which demands discipline in the march towards the Fascist goal. And so "a good Fascist does not swear," and Fascism discourages gambling and some of the latest extravagances of women's dress. "Picture to yourself a revue dressed by an ardent Fascist," says F. L.* You might just as well ask yourself to picture a revue dressed by

* In the January number of DRAMA.

FASCISM AND THE STAGE

John Milton. Surely there are other forms of art beside the revue? and must a successful revue depend upon short skirts and cosmetics? The Fascist movement embodies itself in the Fascist State, and finds its instrument in the institutions of government, which are being created, for the Fascist State itself is something which evolves in the process of creation. Young as yet and the child of a crisis, it is protected by those who gave it birth as the darling of their eyes. It is, indeed, no "liberal state" of the old order with Parliamentary strategy at the play of political factors; but whatever you may think of the necessity or otherwise of constitutional government in questions of politics, you can hardly assert that necessity in questions of the Drama. True, the Italians dream of an empire and worlds across the ocean; true, they have pride in a now long-lost nationality, which will make the spirit of old Rome breathe again reality into the relics of half forgotten things. But our Elizabethan forefathers also had their dreams, inspired by the awakening national sense, and from those dreams no doubt came many worthless things; but from them came William Shakespeare. I do not know how hard the censorship was in those days, but I do not think there would have been much tolerance shown for plays which glorified the King of Spain or poured ridicule upon the Queen of England.

After all, Fascism is a young movement, and it is as yet too soon to know what dramatic art it will give birth to, or what form its creative impulse will take. But let us now ask how fares the drama in Italy to-day. Is it true to say that nothing of worth can find place there?

In the world of opera, Italy still holds her own, for opera is essentially the Italian art which appeals to the national sentiment. "La Scala" now and then

loses its stars. It is not the fault of the Fascist regime, but the temptation of the "big money" of New York. In the world of drama, besides the work of native dramatists, classical or modern, like Pirandello, one finds that of foreigners of various schools and periods. For instance, both Shakespeare and Shaw are played in Italy to-day (in fact, I should like to make a statistical comparison between the numbers of Italians and Englishmen that have seen "Hamlet" and "Candida.") (The Drama is not dead in Italy, and the Fascist regime is willing to initiate experiments in this as in other spheres of life. Only recently Luigi Pirandello and Paola Giordani were entrusted by Mussolini with the task of examining the question of establishing a national theatre at Rome. They have reported in favour of establishing a national theatre at Rome, Milan and Turin. The seat of management of this theatre will be in Rome, but a company will be chosen which shall be large and varied enough to enable productions to take place each evening in all three places. This report has been approved by "il Duce." It is an attempt to combine the advantages of a central national theatre, a rallying place of dramatic art, with those of regionalism. The "provinces" of Italy have never been so subordinate in dramatic taste to Rome as those of France to Paris or those of England to London. A play or opera may fail in Rome and succeed in Milan, or it may make its successful debut in the provinces and only after a long interval of time and numerous Press notices come to the capital. On the other hand, the disadvantages of touring companies are great, and the service which a great rallying place for art could render to Italian dramatists is evident. Fascism is willing to be creative. Let us wait and see.

CONCERNING PRODUCTION

III. HINTS ON PRACTICE

By A. E. Filmer

WHETHER a play be of the Presentational or of the Representational Concept, there are three noticeably distinct ways of approach, three different outlooks upon the problems of its production. Let us call them the executive, the interpretative and the commercial. The last may partake of both the others, but so far as the writer understands it, the commercial outlook is one of double distrust: it distrusts and underrates the public, and distrusts and fears art as such.

The interpretative producer regards the play as so much raw material to be handled at his pleasure. He is an "artist of the theatre," and the authors concept and the theatric concept of the period in which the author worked are alike indifferent to him. To this school the play is only a part, and not a very important part, of a whole in which stage-decoration, lighting, grouping, all in short that is miscalled "production," are held of equal if not greater importance than the spiritual content of the play, the dramatic values of it, the acting, and the understanding of psychology which should govern the stage-direction. Not only for lack of space shall the various manifestations of the "art theatre" movement—"stylization," "subjective production" and the like be mentioned here only in passing. Intellectual honesty demands fidelity to concept as the premise of the stage-director's conclusions when he is dealing with the drama of the spoken word, and the beginner should regard himself as an executant—one who carries out, performs, the work and intentions of the dramatist.

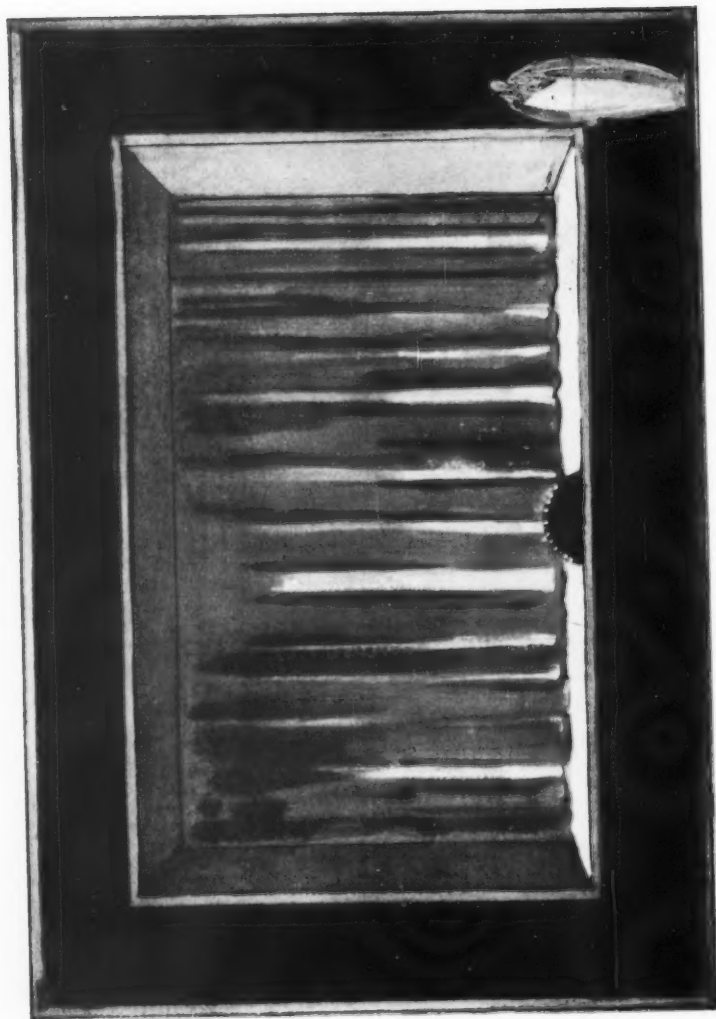
The first problem of the producer is to "mask" the stage. To-day, in the great majority of cases, the play has to be performed on a platform which is the floor of a space enclosed by three walls and a roof, part of the dimensions of the open side being framed by a proscenium. Looking

through the proscenium the producer sees the necessity not only of masking or concealing the walls and roof, but of providing exits and entrances. For a presentational play the stage should be masked and the entrances placed according to the stage-shape of the period and country of its authorship. This does not mean that an accurate replica of say, the Globe Theatre production of "King Henry VIII" is possible, or should be attempted if it were; it does mean that the older plays cannot be properly understood and produced in ignorance or in defiance of the theatric conditions which governed the writing of them, that charm is lost by neglecting those conditions, and that knowledgable adaptation of them is aesthetically imperative.

In the absence of anything comparable to a modern prompt-copy (in which every position and move, and sometimes every pose and gesture are "marked," i.e., described with meticulous care) the producer must draw upon his own imagination and stage-sense for those directions which in many modern instances are given him by the playwright. The novice should realize that presentational stage-direction is so much a matter of the intuitive use of accumulated knowledge and training in aesthetics, that to begin on an Elizabethan or Restoration play would be simply to court discouragement. Strange as the advice may sound, it is wiser to commence with the contemporary theatre and work through the centuries to the Elizabethans, and so, with some inquiry into the ways of the players of mystery and miracle, back to Athens. If the play is modern the author's stage-directions, in many cases, give the "masking" completely; some give only the slightest indications. Mr. Ashley Dukes' "The Man with a Load of Mischief" is a good example of the latter. The author writes: "ACT I.



THE CATHEDRAL SCENE IN "SAINT JOAN,"
FROM THE DESIGN BY LUDWIG SIEVERT.
Reproduced from "Der Szeniker Lud-
wig Sievert," by Ludwig Wagner.



DESIGN FOR A PROSCENIUM BY PROF.
A. BARASOWSKY, FROM "NEUZEITLICHE
BÜHNEN-MALERIE," LEIPZIG.

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CONCERNING PRODUCTION

SCENE: A ROOM IN AN INN. EVENING. (*Enter the INNKEEPER, lighting candles one by one.*) From the dialogue and from such directions as "*The LADY and her MAID are lighted up the stairs,*" one gathers that there is a window with shutters, and a stair in the room, one or more doors, a high-backed chair, but the position of these practicabilities is left to the judgment of the producer. He therefore, must do one of two things: either he must, as it were, force the play into an inn chamber which he has seen or which some one designs for him, or he must so saturate himself with the play that the actual plan of the scene, the position of the practicabilities, the placing of the furniture all grow out of the play itself, with inevitability; all express the metaphysic of it, all contribute to the expression of its spirit, atmosphere, style and rhythm. The positions of the characters and their movements should of course express and illustrate the play's inner meaning as well as its mere surface. Some writers, while giving more directions than Mr. Duke's, still leave much to the producer. Thus Mr. Lennox Robinson indicates, for "*The White Blackbird*," ACT I. SCENE: *A well-furnished sitting-room. There is one door in it, centre back, a window on the right, a fireplace on the left. . . Mrs. Naynoe . . . comes in . . . She sits down above fire. A minute later her husband . . . bustles in . . . He sits down*"—but where he sits the author does not tell us, nor does he inform the reader whether right and left are given according to the English custom, from the stage, or according to the Continental custom, from the auditorium.

There are many published plays, which, like Sir James Barrie's for instance, give much literary description but next to nothing in the way of practical stage-directions. The student should certainly exercise his imagination by reading such plays, trying first to visualise the physical surroundings, then the position of the characters, but at the same time he should study the plays of Ibsen and of Mr. Bernard Shaw, for both those authors give clear and almost complete stage-directions. Make plans of the stage, make little per-

spective sketches of the scenes as described by the dramatist, then read and re-read the play for the positions and movements of the characters. Write a summary of each act: this will help to realize its crucial features. Then write a summary of the entire play and an analysis of each character. Take say, Mr. Shaw's "*The Man of Destiny*" and Ibsen's "*Hedda Gabler*" (because the latter is a short cast) and work on the lines indicated. If, as is more than probable, you "lose" the characters, that is, if you fail to keep them in the mind's eye take chessmen or miniature ninepins and move them about on the plan according to the stage-directions. Try to see the psychological impulse of each movement, and think hard about its nature: whether it is purely psychological in causation and motive, or whether it is expressive or decorative, or whether it is presentational—that is, movement (or position) invented for the sake of theatricality. The finest stage-moves and positions, of course, partake of all these. This study of the directions of experts is, next to actual experience of stage-management under an exacting producer, the best way to train the mind in stage-direction, and apposite stage-direction is the reality of producing, the soul of it as it were, and all else "the limbs and outward flourishes."

Much of course is included in the phrase apposite stage-direction, but the student who thinks about the colour and rhythm, the spirit and atmosphere of a play before he has learned how to mask the stage and where to place his dramatis personæ, and how and why, is working for confusion.

Having studied plays which are copiously directed, the student should take up one with a short cast and with few or preferably no stage-directions whatever. It is better to begin on an interior scene. The play should be read carefully for its story first, then for its concept. It should then be studied, and studied again until it is a whole in the imagination. The summaries mentioned above should be made, and if the text does not visualize easily (and many do not) the producer in the early phases of his work may have no other course than to force the play into a room

CONCERNING PRODUCTION

or a stage-setting which he knows, but this is almost as disastrous as to allow a designer to decide the stage-plan independently of the producer. It would be better (for the student) to read other plays until he lights on one which he "sees" as he studies the text. Some plays are conceived with such power that they visualize in an astonishing way. Well, note these mental pictures, either by written notes or by sketches, weigh the importance of them according to the summaries, and try to see the position of the characters at the crucial moment of each act or scene. The positions should be tested "in the round" by the use of chessmen or ninepins, and marked. Then re-read the scene, moving the characters from one ascertained position to the next, describing their moves in the margin or on a blank leaf. Having completed the moves and positions go through the play and test them for (i) conceptual fidelity; are they in harmony with the author's concept so far as you understand it? (ii) psychological and circumstantial verisimilitude: do the dramatis personae move about, are their positions in accordance with their characters in the circumstances of the scene? (iii) for presentation: is anyone "masking," i.e., concealing a character who is speaking; or moving between the speaker and the spectator; is anything of primary dramatic importance taking place at the extreme right or left of the stage; is any *important* speech or even sentence spoken by a character back to the audience; are your positions too "foot-lighty"—too far down stage and parallel with the footlights; or too far up stage to be sightly; are the characters half hidden by furniture; is it "stuck"—does a character or group remain in one position so long that the audience will tire of it? (iv) test for redundancy: is there so much movement and change of position as to produce an effect of restlessness and fussiness?

It cannot be too much emphasized that such matters as atmosphere, spirit, colour and rhythm can be the result only of experience, aptitude and cultural acquirements, much thought, observation, and pondering.

The novice should, after studying, say a

score of plays with his chessmen, try to produce a one-act play without them—seeing all with the mind's eye alone. He should then make a model of the scene and move the chessmen or scaled cardboard figures about, and judge his results. Some producers can never dispense with their "properties" and something to represent the actors; others find such things hinder, and prefer to work with the mind only. In the writer's opinion, to work out every move and position before rehearsal is a mistake: he seeks the basic positions in the study, working up to them and detailing on the stage, but the beginner would be wise to go to his first rehearsals armed with a fully marked text.

If positions are to be given at the first rehearsal, the producer should insist on playing "on measurements," that is, the stage or floor, if a substitute set is not available, should be chalked with the plan of the scene, properly measured out; the practicabilities (doors, window, etc.) should be set, and substitutes for the hand-properties, if the actual articles cannot be used, should be provided. The furniture should be, if possible, that which the cast will meet at the performance. The producer should give the positions clearly and decisively; he should avoid bothering the players about psychology before they know where they are to sit or move, indeed, unless he meet one whose "attack" is plainly and crassly wrong, it is well to let them get comfortable in their positions before he begins to build the production. At the earliest possible moment he should go into the auditorium and watch the play from every part of the house and especially from the sidemost, the highest and the farthest seats, for all must be in sight and every syllable heard. He must beware, as Mr. W. G. Fay put it to the writer, of "wiring for electric light before the foundations are laid"; he should never interrupt the players unnecessarily nor make negative criticisms; he must not depend mentally upon scenery, upon lighting-effects, upon anything material or incidental, and his aim must be to convince by the appositeness of his stage-direction, that "One" whose censure must in his allowance "o'reway a whole Theatre of Others."

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

WRITING in *The New Statesman*, Mr. W. J. Turner makes the interesting suggestion that the B.B.C. should build or buy a theatre in some central part of London, and give its dramatic, operatic and musical performances there for broadcasting, charging reasonable prices for public admission. "The B.B.C. alone," he continues, "can afford to maintain and develop a first-class organization, and by this means we shall find an English national equivalent for the State and City subsidized theatres and opera houses of the Continent." There is much in this idea to command attention, and it offers an alluring prospect of a central dramatic power house, as it were, in itself a National Theatre, and radiating National Drama throughout the country. It is alluring if only that it meets the common objection that a National Theatre localized in London would benefit metropolitan audiences only, leaving the provinces in the cold.

We are naturally unable to comment here on the practicability of the scheme, whether from the point of view of finance, or of its adaptability to the plans and machinery of the British Broadcasting Corporation. But on the artistic side, one very obvious criticism suggests itself. The programme of any National Theatre or Opera House, worthy of the name, cannot afford to find itself at the mercy of a too proletarian taste. When the day of the "alternative programme" arrives, this objection may fall to the ground. But in any case provision would have to be made that the programmes of the National Operatic and Dramatic Power House should be controlled by an independent direction, and not exclusively from a L.O.

We regret that in our last number some errors appeared in the advertisement announcement of the National Festival. The winner of the Bristol semi-final was, of course, The Clifton Arts Club, and not the Folk House Players as printed. The winning play was correctly given as "The Proposal." An omission was also made in our report of the South-West Area Festival, that namely of the production of "Margaret Moore, Medium," by Ethel Parr, entered as the winning play of the Clifton Dramatic Contest. This contest, so far as we know, was the only attempt made in this area to organize a programme of original plays in connexion with the Festival. A final error is noted by the Oxted and Limpsfield Players, who desire us to state that they entered two plays for the Festival—"Trifles," by Susan Glaspell, and "The House Fairy," by Laurence Housman. The former of these plays only was mentioned in our list.

This number goes to press before the final Festival Matinée at the New Theatre on February 21, which explains why we withhold all further news or comment on this subject. Further reports will, of course, be given in our next number, and in the meanwhile we need only say that everything points to a highly successful and widely attended performance.

THE MONTH'S BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

Let's Go to the Pictures. By Iris Barry. Chatto. 7s. 6d.

The Public and the Motion Picture Industry. By William M. Seabury. Macmillan. 10s. 6d.

Reflections from Shakespeare. By Lena Ashwell. Hutchinson. 21s.

Vincent Crummles, His Theatre and His Times. By F. J. Harvey Darton. Wells Gardner, Darton & Co. £2 2s.

Eugene O'Neill. By Barrett H. Clark. McBride. *The Drums of Oude.* By Austin Strong. Appleton. 5s.

The Wood Demon. By Anton Tchekhov. Chatto and Windus. 5s. net.

The Iron Duke. By A. J. Talbot. Benn. 3s. 6d. *The Government Inspector and Other Plays.* By Nikolay Gogol. Chatto. 7s. 6d. net.

CURIOUS that nobody appears to appreciate the peculiar advantages of the cinema less than the people responsible for the production of films. Otherwise, to take only a couple of obvious examples, they would not waste their time experimenting with "talking pictures" and films in colour. The cinema still persists in trying to beat the theatre on its own ground, when in reality they are artistically so dissimilar that rivalry is impossible. The fundamental difference between them is summed up by Miss Barry when she says that "to go to the pictures is to purchase a dream; to go to the theatre is to buy an experience." In other words, "the theatre is a tonic, the cinema a sedative." "Why Go to the Pictures?" is, so far as I know, the second book of intelligent film criticism to appear. The first was by Vachell Lindsay, published about three years ago. Miss Barry has seen incredible numbers of films. Most of them she hated, but I rather think that she still goes to the cinema in the same sort of mood in which Mr. Darlington recently confessed he goes to a play—she would rather see a bad film than no film at all. As criticism, her book is a decidedly refreshing contrast to the oh-so-gentlemanly methods of criticism which prevail nowadays. Her style has the downright quality of the best film captions, and there is a huge amount of uncharitable enjoyment to be had from the spectacle of Miss Barry roundly "telling off" some of the most famous stars, or dismissing much-boasted super-films with a single devastating adjective. This is quite the best book on the drama that I have read for months—and when I say "drama" I mean the sort which the pious spell with a capital D, and not the so-called "silent drama." Miss Barry writes with so much understanding of the stage as well as the film that it is impossible to read her book without becoming more definite in one's own mind about some of the essential qualities of the theatre as well as of the "pictures."

A point which Miss Barry stresses repeatedly in her book is the enormous influence of the cinema as propaganda, and Mr. Seabury elaborates this point with a wealth of statistics and technical detail. But the book is not nearly so pompous

as it sounds. In fact it is very readable, and as important as it is practical.

Most writers of books on Shakespeare seem to consider it not quite good form to refer to any production of Shakespeare's plays in the modern theatre. Or perhaps it is just that so few of these writers ever trouble to see the plays acted. In spite of the vast amount that is written about Shakespeare, the actor—as Miss Lena Ashwell points out—has been curiously silent. "He alone has committed the plays to memory, and more than anybody else has lived them." So here at last is a book about Shakespeare written, as it were, in the theatre. The plays are examined primarily as material for the producer, with constant references to recent productions; the historical background to each play is painted in with just those details necessary for a producer groping for the right atmosphere; the psychological problems are handled freshly and sanely, from an essentially modern point of view, with the clearness and firmness with which a producer learns to delineate character. It is a pity that a book of such general interest and usefulness should cost so much.

Mr. Harvey Darton has "lifted" the story of Vincent Crummles from Nicholas Nickleby and arranged it as a continuous narrative. Most people will wish that Mr. Darton had published by itself his long introduction on the provincial theatre under the later Georges and William IV, or perhaps together with the admirable illustrations scattered through the book. It is much too good to be only available if one pays a couple of guineas for the entire book.

Mr. Barrett Clark's study of Eugene O'Neill is swift, vivid and entertaining, full of good things about the mechanics of playwriting, and—in spite of the author's generous admiration for his subject—finely and fastidiously critical.

"The Drums of Oude" is a one-act play which ran for two years in the West End nearly a score of years ago. Now this is not at all the sort of play we are supposed to enjoy nowadays, but this flamboyantly melodramatic situation, together with all the stock figures and conventions of melodrama, are handled with so sure and brilliant a sense of the stage that if ever I see it in the theatre I am quite sure that I shall be emotionally devastated by it. The other two plays in the book are equally effective on less florid lines, especially the attractive little mime play, "Popo."

"The Wood Demon" is not only interesting as the basis of "Uncle Vanya," but is on its own merits a much better play than the one which was made out of it. "The Iron Duke" is irritatingly jerky and disjointed, as each scene presents a completely different trait in the Duke's character, with the result that he only comes fully to life when the play is over, and one pieces the various characteristics together. Nevertheless each scene is built up swiftly and surely with unerring certainty of touch. The result is a series of amazingly vivid character-sketches and incidents. As to the collection of Gogol's plays, it was badly needed, and has been very well done.

THE VILLAGE PAGEANT

By Mary E. Kelly

However wintry the weather, it is not too early to be making plans for warmer days. So we are glad to publish this article, which may well inspire some of our country readers to a new and delightful form of dramatic enterprise.

THE Village Pageant is no light matter. To begin with, the owner of the garden or field that contains the perfect pageant ground must be moulded to the producer's will, and sometimes he takes a great deal of moulding. Then the Rector, the President of the W.I., and the Schoolmaster must be enlisted as friends, and then a public meeting must be called. The meeting consists of those who are already determined that the Pageant shall take place, one or two "giglets," a handful of small boys, and a few people who have looked in cautiously but curiously, and who do not mean to commit themselves. Outside the door is the usual group of youths leaning over a bicycle.

The meeting passes pleasantly enough, each little group chatting in a friendly manner on the topics of the day, and pausing occasionally to vote, unanimously, or to laugh at any little joke that the chairman may offer. Thus the great scheme for getting up a pageant is launched, and the committee has to be elected. Now committee meetings in a village are of the nature of social functions, an opportunity for "cleaning yourself" and meeting your friends in pleasant conversation and gossip. Thus the election of a committee requires tact, and an intimate knowledge of the personnel of the village. There are certain people who are always invited to serve on every committee—they have always done so, and they look on it as a right. But each will refuse, as a matter of form, and will say that "it is time that someone else had a turn," until a little jocular flattery from the chairman induces them to consent. And even if they are not present, they must still be elected. A tea committee is easily formed; everyone knows who are the best people to run a tea, but the question of finance sobers and unites the meeting, for money is not a matter to be taken lightly. The question of the Pageant itself, however, is the

signal for the groups to divide once more, and to begin a variety of whispered discussions, more or less relevant, but usually less. No one gives an opinion, and the decision is left to the secretary quite unanimously. The meeting breaks up, and re-forms outside the door, absorbing the youths. It now rescinds all the decisions made inside, decides that the Pageant will mean giving too much time, and that it will rain on the day. Thus the village is committed to the Pageant, a big undertaking for a community that has neither dramatic experience, historical knowledge, nor books. Yet country people are naturally resourceful, and from the very difficulty of the job, they often make the greater achievement.

The Rector writes it, probably in blank verse that is a little lame, but he has been most enthusiastic in searching diocesan and parish records, and at the end he, at least, knows what happened in the village in the past. No pageant is complete, of course, without the founding of an abbey and a visit from Queen Elizabeth. There will also be a scene containing Ancient Britons and Druids, and, since the schoolchildren must do their folk dancing, there will be May Day revels. When the Pageant is actually written and cast, the village begins to throw itself into it, and gloomy forebodings are forgotten. Village patriotism plays an important part, for is not this village to be exalted above every other village by its pageant? The preparations bring to light much hidden talent and ingenuity; they also heal many an ancient feud, and the work of costume and property making adds greatly to the happiness of the village. The necessary study of history, too, proves a great delight to the village, and opens a new world to the actors, who had never before looked on history as a thing that really happened. The sense of history is curiously lacking in a people

THE VILLAGE PAGEANT

whose life is so much bound up in tradition, and all past time is on a flat plane without any outstanding figures, briefly summed up as "old-fashioned days." The Pageant is a unique opportunity for making the past live again.

The actors, for the most part, plunge straight into a pageant without having ever acted in a play, and since those that lead an outdoor life have a certain aptitude for this kind of acting, they do so with remarkable success. They have a slow, measured, lengthy walk that is often most effective on an outdoor stage; they are accustomed to use their voices in the open

air, calling to their horses or their dogs, or speaking across a field to a fellow labourer, so that they do not find difficulty in making them carry, and their attitude in repose is natural and dignified. Again, from their lack of self-consciousness, they are excellent in a crowd, and a pageant depends on its crowds for its success.

The final performance is a great success, from the enthusiasm thrown into the preparations, but the chief value of a pageant lies in the historical education of the people, the development of their various artistic powers, and the added spirit of neighbourliness that the preparations have bestowed.

DISTURBANCES IN THE THEATRE

A Letter to the Editor

SIR,—Audiences are plagued by tea, chocolate, programme and book of the words sellers. During the entire performance there is an undercurrent of whispers and fidgeting. Orders taken for teas, trays handed out, and in darkness while the play is proceeding, payment made and change fumbled for. Trays are put on the floor and when persons stand in the pit there are furtive crashing sounds of crockery. Programmes and the money for them are handed down a congested line of seats to late comers. (In Paris the programmes are only sold in the foyer, in America given free.)

Then there is the curse of smoking, striking of matches, spirals of smoke carried by a draught into one's face, the auditorium stuffy and clouded, making it difficult to observe facial expression of the actors.

The bar is another nuisance, between every act in narrow and cramped seats men push in and out and return to their places when the curtain has gone up.

This drinking, eating, smoking racket is a degradation to dramatic art; it offends enthusiasts and caters for those not worth considering.

There are common persons who bring food with them; recently at a Russian play a woman just behind me ate pears from a paper bag throughout the performance.

The pit, by its position, is far from the

stage; its seats are cramped and close, and if the play is popular, persons are allowed to stand.

An interesting play needs close attention to follow properly the sequence of events and the author's thought, but this is impossible with the persistent and incessant movements and whispers of the selling attendants and the fidgeting of those standing and therefore uncomfortable. But if the stalls are sixteen shillings, the pit's mouth is where thousands must buy their tickets.

Now you cannot have an argument both ways. If the better-class theatres profess to take the drama seriously, they must have their tongues in their cheeks to assume that anything good could tolerate these unnecessary disturbances to pleasure.

I understand that all this huckstering is not in the hands of the lessee but is farmed out to the tobacco interest. The public are too much exploited by persons having no real connexion with the drama.

Let the managers be masters in their own houses: forbid *all* sales in auditorium; abolish smoking; give up the bar; and let us have a simple and cheaper programme with the essential items and not a *réclame* for somebody's boots or face cream. Rubbish cuts no ice; let us sweep out the money changers from the temple, for not till then will drama be properly served.

Yours truly,

JOSEPHINE PITCAIRN KNOWLES.

SCHOOL PLAYS

With special reference to the recent production of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" at The Hall School, Weybridge.

MOST school productions are praiseworthy because of the amount of enthusiasm shown by the performers. Some succeed because one particular boy or girl stands out above the rest and carries the audience away by his or her innate skill in acting. Rarely it is that we have a school play that is well acted and well produced; but on December 16, 1926, when I visited The Hall School, Weybridge, and saw a dramatic version of "The Ancient Mariner," I was enthralled by a production that could not have been done better by an adult dramatic society. It was faultless, and I wish Coleridge had been there to see it.

The play, produced in the Reinhardt-Craig manner, was performed in the school gymnasium, which, with its numerous entrances and exits, is very suitable for such a performance.

I do not know the names of the girls who took part in the performance, but they all moved with grace, they spoke their lines realizing they were speaking verse and not prose (which is more than some professionals do), and their acting not only displayed keenness, but intelligence.

There was a good deal of incidental music played by a small invisible orchestra. One is so accustomed to hearing unsuitable or unnecessary incidental music that it was a relief to witness a production with an orchestra which actually *belonged* to the play. The music was admirably chosen and the orchestra dealt with it most efficiently. Moreover, as the play only lasted about eighty minutes, we were spared the boredom of an interval.

After the performance, Miss Gilpin, the headmistress, announced that no individual was responsible for the beautiful production. In a really good school community this is as it should be. But I felt that Miss Gilpin was not quite speaking the truth, for without her enterprise and her inspiration such a production would have been

impossible. I understand that dramatic work is one of the features of the school. Drama takes a prominent place in the school curriculum: it is not regarded as a luxury; it is a lesson, just as arithmetic is a lesson. Some people think that this is a mistake because it encourages children to join the acting profession afterwards. "There are so many temptations on the stage" these people say.

This sort of humbug is doing more harm to the world than the stage has ever done or ever will do. Temptation! Are there no "temptations" in the Navy or the Army? Evidently not, for parents and schoolmasters who deplore the idea of too many theatricals willingly approve of military training; and yet all the boys who are forced into the O.T.C. do not eventually become soldiers. And I am certain that the drama in schools does not necessarily encourage the children to become actors or actresses. What it does encourage is a love of the theatre and an appreciation of intelligent drama. We are not preparing our children for war and strife, but for peace and happiness; and to enjoy peace and happiness we require a healthy audience.

These girls at The Hall School are not learning to become actresses, they are learning to become members of a community which will allow the theatre to be the intelligent place it was meant to be. They are the spring and fountain of the blood that was shed during the war, and they are part of that multitude of young people who are preparing to take our place. "They are very attractive, saner than the generation that grew up during the war, with none of its neurosis and triviality and cynicism"—to quote from Mr. St. John Ervine's book, "The Organized Theatre." Mr. Ervine is right; the children are splendid, but we must keep an eye on their parents. No, I expect the children will do that!

C. S. D. MOORE

THE ART OF SYBIL THORNDIKE

IN considering the art of Sybil Thorndike, the writer's thoughts go back five years to the occasion of an "All-Star" matinée by the British Empire Shakespeare Society. Numerous excerpts were given from Shakespeare's plays, and one short scene—it lasted a bare quarter of an hour—haunts the memory as vividly to-day as it stirred the emotions five years ago.

It was the death scene of Queen Katharine from "Henry VIII" and Sybil Thorndike played the part of the queen.

One's first impression of a great artist is always an interesting experience and colours in some measure one's whole estimate of her powers and capabilities.

We looked that afternoon for the vivid personality of a great artist—and we saw a frail drooping woman, weary unto death, with white, haggard face and pale, restless hands, bitter but queenly still, dying in loneliness, attended only by a few faithful retainers. A tragic figure—the spirit of tragedy—not Sybil Thorndike at all but the hapless Katharine herself, brought to life again to show us "the pity of it all."

And that is where Miss Thorndike's art differs from that of most famous players. She does not steep every part she plays in her own personality. When she is acting she has no personality of her own. She pours herself, her will, her intellect, everything into the part that she is portraying, and for the time Sybil Thorndike as an entity ceases to exist, is submerged absolutely in the living personality of a Saint Joan or a Medea, a Jane Clegg or a Lady Macbeth.

Miss Thorndike's appeal is not through the emotions but through the intellect, and her art cannot be judged merely by casual acquaintance. Perhaps it is because of this that some people cannot appreciate her talents on seeing her for the first time. They go to the theatre eager to be thrilled or harrowed, as the case may be, by the fire and passion of a second Bernhardt, and they see, perhaps, Jane Clegg, a poor woman, badly dressed, almost common-

place; noble of soul, no doubt, but infinitely restrained—a tragic figure but one who keeps her tragedy to herself; and they go home and say that Sybil Thorndike's talents have been greatly over-rated, that she underacts and has no "charm," that she is "unsympathetic" and does not appeal to them. But then it is Jane Clegg they have been seeing, and Jane Clegg was like that.

Miss Thorndike is essentially a tragedienne and it is only in a "heroic" rôle that her full powers come into play. "Saint Joan" is generally acknowledged to be her greatest achievement to date, followed closely by her Hecuba and her Medea.

She is the perfect Joan of Arc—the living impersonation of our dreams, but one cannot tell how much she owes to Mr. Shaw for this, or how much he owes to her.

"Saint Joan" is a great play, and it needs a great play to bring forth Miss Thorndike's full powers. She is not one of those actresses who can galvanize a poor play into life by sheer virtuosity. If the material is great, she can emphasize its greatness by the beauty of her performance, but if the material is poor, it gains very little from her handling of the part.

Miss Thorndike glories in the beauties of the classics, but, nevertheless, she is not afraid to give us the newest works of the modern psychological and impressionistic schools if she can discover in them a grain of beauty or an earnest striving after truth which renders them, in her opinion, worthy of a hearing.

There is no showiness or glamour about her, none of that "temperament" which, according to legend, is the attribute of all great artists. She is just a simple, straightforward, earnest woman, always ready to do her bit, who gives herself unsparingly in the cause of art or charity and is not afraid of hard work.

JOAN LITTLEFIELD



SYBIL THORNDIKE. FROM THE BRONZE BY
JACOB EPSTEIN.



DESIGN BY HUMPHREY JENNINGS FOR
 HEYWOOD'S "THE FAIR MAID OF THE
 WEST." To be produced by the
 Cambridge A.D.C., March 7, 1927.

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SCOTTISH NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY

The Scottish National Theatre Society opened their Christmas Season in Glasgow on December 25 by presenting four plays. Two are three-act comedies: "The Glen is Mine," by John Brandane, and "The Serjeant-Major," by William Chapman; and two one-act plays, "C'est la Guerre," by Morland Graham, and "Count Albany," by Donald Carswell.

"The Glen is Mine," preceded by "C'est la Guerre," formed the first bill. This is probably the best three-act Scottish comedy in The Players' repertory, and is always well received by Glasgow audiences. It was well produced and well played, but calls for no particular comment.

"C'est la Guerre" is a charming little piece of a somewhat sentimental nature. In other hands it might have turned into downright sentimentality, but as played by Mr. T. P. Maley, Miss Jean Taylor Smith and Mr. Yuill, provided a very agreeable entertainment. It will shortly be presented in Glasgow music halls. Mr. Maley plays the part of a "Jock," who has been left behind in a cellar "somewhere in France" after his company has gone up the line. An elderly Frenchman and his daughter, of good social position, seek shelter there. The girl has been wounded, and "Jock" attends to her wounds and looks after her father. There follows a somewhat sentimental episode, after which the soldier collects his kit and walks out into the night with a shrug of the shoulders, and the remark "c'est la guerre."

"The Sergeant-Major," which is preceded by "Count Albany," makes one wonder how any committee of intelligent persons could possibly have selected this play for presentation on any stage, and is only interesting in so far as showing what a clever company of players can make of the thinnest and dreariest material. It concerns the activities of two rival carriers in a small lowland village, and was only redeemed from sheer futility by the clever acting of Mr. Morland Graham. Mr. Maley also was good in a thankless part. The setting, which remains the same through all three acts, was delightful, and strongly reminiscent of Picasso's "décor" for "The Three-cornered Hat."

In "Count Albany" The Players have selected one of the best one-act plays I have ever seen or read. It deals with Charles Edward Stuart in his declining days, and the action takes place in the apartments of the Cardinal of York, in Rome. One learns on the Cardinal's entrance that the old Pretender is on his deathbed, and that Prince Charles Edward is expected shortly in Rome. He arrives, accompanied by his mistress, Clementina Walkinshaw, admirably played by Miss Elliot Mason. The Cardinal's Secretary, Monsignor McIntosh, a Highlander, provides the Prince with some whisky. Under its influence Charles regains most palpably some of the glamour that must have surrounded him during his youth, but eventually collapses into the sodden present. Clementina, who has been dismissed by the Cardinal to find lodgings elsewhere, returns slightly drunk with Father McIntosh, and a brawl between the Prince and his mistress ensues, which is interrupted by the arrival of a messenger with the news that the old Pretender is dead. Charles attempts to make a

formal speech in recognition of the new dignity fallen upon him, but is too drunk to carry it to a conclusion, and suddenly realizes that he has forgotten how to be a King. Mr. R. B. Wharrie played the Prince with marked capability. The gradual transition from sobriety to exultation and the subsequent collapse was very well done. Mr. Halbert Tatlock, as the Cardinal, carried off the part more by dint of sheer personality than by any technical excellence. Mr. Brooks gave an admirable portrait of the fiery little Scottish priest. This play was well received, but had it shown Charles in a more favourable light it would probably have been more warmly welcomed. It is, however, a definite and valuable addition to the all too short list of Scottish plays. Mr. Tyrone Guthrie has more than justified his appointment as producer to the S.N.T.S.

CLIFTON ARTS CLUB

The present season opened with the Clifton Dramatic Contest for original plays, held in November last. This was the first time that a prize for play-writing had been offered in Bristol to all comers, and the response was so gratifying, both in quantity and quality, that it is hoped to repeat the enterprise this year. It is believed that the Contest was unique in this, that the award was made not merely to the best play, but to the best complete performance, so that account was taken of staging, production and acting, as well as writing; the purpose of the Contest being to encourage original work on the stage. So important was this factor that one play, of which, in M.S., the judges had formed a very high opinion, proved so disappointing on the stage that it failed to reach the final.

Of the plays sent in the British Drama League selected the best six, and arranged them in two heats of three each, the best three being chosen by the judges to compete in the final. In the first heat two comedies were adjudged equal first—"Quickly Does It," a brilliant "first play," by Mr. Stephen Barnett, and "Babes and Sucklings," by Mr. C. E. Roberts, who is the author of several plays produced both by amateurs and professionally, and a member of the Club. The second heat was won fairly easily by "Margaret Moore, Medium," a very effective drama, by Miss Ethel Parr, who is well-known in Clifton as a dramatist; and in the final, where these three plays re-appeared, it again proved successful, though this time it gained the decision by only the narrowest of margins from "Quickly Does It."

For the great success of this enterprise the Club is particularly indebted to Mr. G. H. Holloway, Mr. H. Norton Mathews, and Miss Louise Regnis, who kindly consented as act as judges of the Contest.

The standard both of writing and performance was remarkably high, and it is clear that there is a great deal of talent in Bristol awaiting such an opportunity as the Clifton Arts Club has given and hopes to repeat.

By previous arrangement with the League, the

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winning play, "Margaret Moore, Medium," took part, as representative of the Contest, in the National Festival of Community Drama. The six plays entered in the South-Western Area were presented on December 13 at the Clifton Arts Club and the Folk House before Mr. W. A. Darlington. The former society accommodated the winner of the Contest, besides presenting "The Proposal," by Tchekov which was the Club's own entry, and which, as previously announced, was selected as the winner of the South-Western Festival.

The encouragement of original work is one of the aims of the Club's policy, as was exemplified by the inclusion of two short plays, written specially for the occasion, in the "Christmas Revue," presented on January 14 and 15 last.

HAMPSTEAD

Last month the Touchstone Players of Hampstead Garden Suburb gave two performances of "Twelfth Night" that deserved good marks. Praise couched in such terms must needs seem faint, but in truth these young people were hampered by conscientious recollections of a school subject and of visits to the Old Vic. For the Old Vic has by no means shaken itself free from the Old Victorian tradition that all lovers must be sentimentalized, and all speeches in blank verse delivered in tones that will conduce to solemnity in the audience. Hence "Twelfth Night" comes across as a sentimental love-tale, patched with buffoonery. It is a romantic farce, in the irresponsible vein of the Yuletide season; boisterous, rollicking, yet preserving echoes of the old Feast of the Dead. This particular production showed zeal and considerable talent in most of those concerned. What they lacked was, above all things, self-reliance. Before they tackle another Elizabethan play, they will be well-advised to look into the question of the construction of the old play-houses, to choose a play none of them has ever seen or "done" for an exam., to discover as well as they can what conditions went to its birth and growth, and then to bring their own common sense and their own senses of humour to bear upon its interpretation.

M. M.

OXFORD SCHOOL FOR PRODUCERS

Under the auspices of the Drama Committee (Oxford Rural Communities Council), a "School for Producers" was held at 19 Norham Gardens, Oxford, on Saturday January 29, by Mrs. R. W. Lee. About forty representatives of Oxfordshire Women's Institutes were present, many of whom are producing Shakespeare Scenes or a half-hour modern play for competition in the spring.

Mrs. Lee discussed choice of scenes and plays; work of producers; grouping, costume, etc. She illustrated parts of her lecture by means of a portable theatre and dolls.

ST. PANCRAS PEOPLE'S THEATRE

February 3 and 5.

The Repertory Company performed Herman Heijerman's curious yet intensely dramatic "The Rising Sun," translation by Christopher St. John.

It has as its motifs the unsuccessful struggle of the small shopkeeper against the large capitalistic stores and the intense love of daughter for father, leading to crime for his sake.

Reginald Higdon played the Shopkeeper with distinction, making the unbusinesslike character very human.

As his daughter, Constance Lynn acted to perfection. The part is both difficult and strenuous, ranging from laughter to temporary madness, yet never once did she over-act. I confess myself to have been completely carried away by her "big" scene in the last act.

Some of the minor parts were not too well played, in particular they lacked the art of seeming natural when not engaged in dialogue.

All readers who take an interest in the "little theatre" and have not already done so, should visit this centre of activity. They will observe the excellence of curtains (for the small stage) in place of scenery, a first-class lighting system, careful attention to detail and good production.

OSWALD GILBERT.

BOURNEMOUTH DRAMATIC AND ORCHESTRAL CLUB

The Club entered on its eighth season in September, 1927, with a membership of over six hundred, and gave the following performances for its monthly at-homes:

September.—"Mr. Pim Passes By."

October.—"The White-headed Boy."

November.—Pictures from Punch (by kind permission of the proprietors of *Punch*). "The Sacred Cause," "The Man who Married a Dumb Wife."

January.—"The Man from Toronto."

In December, in place of the usual at-home, the Club gave performances at the Theatre Royal, of "Dear Brutus" and "Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure." The programme for the remainder of the season includes "Sweet Lavender," "Outward Bound" and "The Critic."

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Birmingham University Dramatic Society, whose last year's production of *Salma* attracted so much interest has decided this year to present "The Dance of Life," by Hermon Ould, as its Annual Play, instead of "Princess Bebe," as previously announced.

This comedy of modern life has that youthful appeal which made *Salma* so suitable for a University play and offers another excellent opportunity to Mr. Alec. Shanks, who is again painting the scenery.

The production will be undertaken by Mr. Eric Knight and incidental music is being composed by Mr. Chris. Edmunds.

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PLAYROOM SIX.

At 6 New Compton Street, London, W.C.
 "The Father of a Family," Goldoni's slight but lively comedy, was played with freshness and intelligence in a manner free from "stylistic" exaggerations, and came nearer to the spirit of its original than many more ambitious productions. The eighteenth-century translation is pleasing, and the lines were for the most part very well delivered. Frequent asides are an important feature of Goldoni's dramatic method, and these gained in value by the enforced intimacy of a tiny theatre. The setting of ivory-white, with gold-outlined mock panels of correctly conceived proportions, proved restful to the eyes and adequate to the play. A spirited pace was preserved, and the waits were short. One performance, that of Miss Stella Mary Pearce as Fiametta, was of outstanding merit. She made every point in her vivacious part with effortless artistry, and she looked like Pamela in a picture by Highmore. Hers was the most delicately apt performance in eighteenth-century comedy that has been seen in London for a long time, and for that alone the play was worth a visit. On the whole the dresses were very good; but Signora Beatrice's undersized and farcical hat was an error of judgment. Arlecchino was overidealized: this was no buffoon, but a Russian dancer. And, unless tradition or stage-direction require it, one would prefer that Florindo, the White-haired Boy, should not sit upon his mother's knee: that seemed an error of taste. One or two performances were immature, but that practice will amend. That this young company has set about its work so whole-heartedly, copying its own play from the Museum, making its own dresses, building its own scene, and doing these things well, is a reason for respecting its pretension to be taken seriously. Those who wish for experience must make their own opportunities—that is the opinion of the Playroom Six—and they have the courage to act on their opinion. Goldoni himself once directed an amateur theatre; and these actors except for the accident of a County Council whose rules are inimical to cheap public playhouses, is professional. It is, by the way, an interesting point for discussion, whether any private society can, as a society, hold professional rank.

GWEN JOHN.

PICKERING, YORKSHIRE

During the second week of January performances of the well-known and apparently ever-green Christmas mystery "Eager Heart" were given, before large audiences, in the Memorial Hall, Pickering, Yorks. Despite the many dramatic activities of this ancient and interesting town, no play of the kind had ever before been undertaken there, and all credit for initiating and organizing the production is due to the local Women's Institute and Mrs. J. L. Kirk. The beauty and simplicity of the Eager Heart story, illustrative as it is of fundamental religious ideas, attracted people of every denomination to unite in achieving a notable success. The acting was in many cases of more than ordinary merit; the music, consisting chiefly of solos and chorales from Bach's Christmas

Oratorio, could not have been more appropriate; and the sheer dramatic effect of the speeches and situations showed clearly how heaviness and feebleness, so often the faults of more or less sacred representations, are not necessarily involved but rather may be avoided in the reverential treatment of a solemn theme. "The moving scenes," to quote the *Yorkshire Post*, "were splendidly reproduced, and the dressing, staging and lighting most effective. The vision of the Holy Family and choir of angels was a striking picture and one which will not soon be forgotten." The producer was Mr. Gilbert Hudson.

DALSTON

The Queen's Miscellany, by the Queen's Players. Albion Hall, Dalston, January 21 and 22, 1927.

These players are to be highly commended in taking their work seriously; their Miscellany included the first production of three one-act plays, one of which was written by a member of the company.

"The Analyst," by Fred Williams failed as a dramatic work in that it had little or no action and the lines did not contain sufficient wit to be in themselves amusing. "The Losing Side," by Dorothy Hewlett, a working-class drama was much better, though one felt at times the author lacked invention; producing many awkward pauses and a sense of uneven continuity. The three principal characters were finely acted by Carlotta Porter, Stephen Garrett and especially William Spring. Both "Daniel in the Lions' Den" and "The Broker" were of the revue sketch order and in their way quite amusing. "Young Heaven," by Miles Malleson needed atmosphere, Esther Simmons and Harry Korn failed to imagine the incidents of the dialogue. Alice Cumber as "Fred the Char" was excellent. Particularly in this play, to a less extent in some of the others, the producer made use of far too many pauses. In moderation the pause can be most effective but a too liberal application is apt to drag the whole performance. Of the recitations which intercepted the sketches I was greatly impressed by Ernest Beach in W. W. Gibson's "In the Orchestra." His voice, enunciation and sparing gesture were excellent but above all he excelled in imagination. He saw clearly in his mind the incidents of the poem and imparted his vision to the audience.

OSWALD GILBERT.

GORDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY

"The Lilies of the Field," by J. H. Turner. Gordon Dramatic Society, January 15, 1927.

The one person who deserved praise above all others in this production was the prompter whose voice was constantly heard. As a consequence the show suffered considerably, good scenes were marred and many of the "bon mots" were completely lost. As many of the company possess talent, they would do well to remedy this fault in future productions.

Connie Hughes and Bessie Kelling were excellent as the twins whilst Hector Paterson is to be congratulated on his clever study of the eccentric Bryan Ropes. Amy Pankhurst made an admirable Lady Susan as also Stanley Lawford as the Revd.

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John Head. This actor should remember to carry the characteristics of the part throughout the play; his adopted "Oxford voice" was inclined to be intermittent.

OSWALD GILBERT.

THE BROOKSBY DRAMATIC CLUB, FINCHLEY.

This Finchley Society selected "Lovely Peggy," a romance of Peg Woffington and David Garrick, by J. R. Crawford, with which to end its second season. The greatest difficulty in presenting this interesting play is that it depicts not only those two famous personalities of the English stage, but many other well-known characters, including Dr. Samuel Johnson, James Quin, Charles Macklin, George Anne Bellamy, John Rich, of Covent Garden, Tate Wilkinson and Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams.

Despite defects and the handicaps of scenery, furniture, etc., the production as a whole was an undoubted success. This was very largely due to Miss Ella Crawley who, in the exceptionally long and difficult part of the title-role, gave a performance of great depth and beauty. Mr. F. E. Hughes as David Garrick, and Mr. H. W. Sampson as Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams, gave good support, and Mr. Sampson is to be congratulated on his work as producer, and the casting of the play.

H. G.

THE NORTHERN ASSURANCE DRAMATIC CLUB

This club gave a very uneven rendering of Ian Hay's amusing comedy, "The Sport of Kings." The team work was bad, but some good individual performances were given. Maurice Goodfellow as Amos Purdie and Alan Robinson as Bates were distinctly good, but too much inclined to force their parts. Curtis Dudman as Algernon acted well and with great ease, but he has several mannerisms which should be eradicated, especially too much gesture and movement. Mona Hall gave an excellent character-study as Mrs. Purdie. I must again congratulate Mary Wix on a perfectly natural performance as Dulcie.

The production side was very weak; cues were not picked up smartly; much more "punch and go" was needed; the pace was far too slow for this type of play. The noises "off" were not well done; in particular the "cheers of the crowd" were more reminiscent of the wails of a funeral.

OSWALD GILBERT

ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN

Among plays of the season of Epiphany, Miss Edith Craig's revival of an old English nativity play in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, should not be forgotten. The easy spaciousness of style which characterizes this producer's work, "strong without haste; in particular the 'cheers of the crowd' were more reminiscent of the wails of a funeral."

80

draperies, gave, with careful lighting, all needed illusion of scene and distance. The length of the church became a journey. The colour and richness of the three kings; the simplicity of the shepherds, with the rapt ecstasy of Patricia Hayes as the youngest shepherd; the adorable wonder of Mary, were lovely and unforgettable. It seems a pity that three of the Wren churches should not be given to Mr. William Poel, Mr. Nugent Monck, and Miss Edith Craig, to produce devotional plays at midday, and bring beauty to the City.

GWEN JOHN.

THE DOUGLASS PLAYERS

The Douglass Players (formerly called the St. George's Players) are a notable example of a group of young, inexperienced people who, by their perseverance and enthusiasm, have improved and progressed to a remarkable degree since the beginning of their work a year or so ago.

This, of course, is due to a great extent to Miss Douglass, but their last production of "Everyman and Michael" on January 8 was a new venture, and one which brought the Company great credit. They have shown that they are able to tackle plays of this calibre, and we look forward to further productions with interest.

FORUM THEATRE GUILD

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The First Production of the Guild takes place at the
ROYALTY THEATRE,

On MONDAY EVENING, FEB. 28, when
"COCKS AND HENS,"

By C. K. Munro,

Will be Produced by Robert Atkins, Managing
Director of the Guild.

The Directorate have decided to present an English play as the first offering, and have assembled a brilliant cast to perform this new work by the author of "At Mrs. Beams," "The Rumour," etc., etc. In "Cocks and Hens" Mr. Munro develops an entirely new theme, very different from any he has previously handled.

The Directorate desire to stress the fact that the Guild is not a repertory theatre in the ordinary sense of the term, although its programme includes the presentation of a series of eminent plays by English and foreign authors of all periods.

Each play will be put on for a maximum run of eight weeks, but in cases of conspicuous success being achieved by any play, the run at the Royalty will be restricted to this period of eight weeks, any especially popular play being removed to another house in the ordinary way, so as not to interfere with the Guild's policy.

The success of the Guild depends on the response of the subscribers, for whom up to two-thirds of the house capacity will be reserved.

Mr. Charles B. Cochran has accepted the position of Chairman of the Management Committee.

Full particulars of the Guild's constitution and organization can be had on application.

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